DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 194 138 JC 800 565

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TITLE Trends Affecting Undergraduate Education in the University of California.
INSTITUTION California Univ., Berkeley. Board of Regents.
PUB DATE 16 Oct 80
NOTE 22p.: Paper presented to the Board of Regents of the University of California, Committee on Educational Policy (October 16, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Academic Standards; Articulation (Education); *College Transfer Students; *Community Colleges; Declining Enrollment; Ethnic Groups; Financial Problems; Higher Education; *High School Students; State Aid; *State Universities; Student Attrition; *Transfer Programs; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *California

ABSTRACT

The excellent academic reputation enjoyed by the undergraduate division of the University of California (UC) is threatened by the decline in the number of community college transfer students and by their relatively poor academic performance. Contributing to this problem are five educational trends expected to continue into the 1980's: (1) the decline in the number of high school graduates, resulting in lower college enrollments and decreased state funding; (2) an increase in the proportion of minority students, many of whom experience high attrition rates; (3) an increased emphasis on vocational education at community colleges, resulting in smaller transfer programs of lower quality; (4) the growing demand for remedial courses at community colleges and the concomitant difficulty of maintaining academic transfer programs compatible with the lower divisions at UC; and (5) the possibility of future budget cuts which may further erode student academic preparation. Many of these problems can be traced to the poor academic training provided by the state's high schools as a result of inadequate state funding and societal factors such as the changing role of the family. Clearly, if these problems are to be solved, UC must take a leading role in increasing awareness of these negative trends, defending adequate state funding at all levels, and insisting upon the highest academic standards. (JP)

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TRENDS AFFECTING UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Gerald R. Kissler

UCLA Planning Office

Presentation to the

Board of Regents of the University of California

Committee on Educational Policy

October 16, 1980

JC 800 565

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TRENDS AFFECTING UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Gerald R. Kissler

It is indeed an honor for me to follow Sandy Astin, Sandy Elberg, Marty Trow, Karl Pister, and Bill Schaefer in addressing the Regents on matters of educational policy. As a planner and as chairman of one of the University's task groups that have been studying undergraduate enrollment, I have been giving a lot of thought to undergraduate education and the relationship of the University of California to the other segments of education in the state. I do not come here today to entertain, but to inform. My purpose is not to exaggerate, but to portray honestly the importance of the problems we face. The serious issue before us is the cause for which this University has stood for more than a century--the standards of excellence for our own academic programs, and the preparation of those who come to study with one of the best faculties in the world.

We Can Be Proud of Our Undergraduate Programs

As we look around the campuses of the University of California, there are many reasons for us to be proud of our undergraduate programs. These programs have an excellent reputation. University of California baccalaureate recipients are highly sought after by business and industry; and by the best graduate schools. The overwhelming majority of our students are pleased with the University experience. While they sometimes express concerns about its size and impersonality, they also recognize that the University's breadth and richness of programs and academic support services cannot be matched by any other institution in the state.

We select our students from the very best our high schools have to offer. They come with high aspirations and most of them reach their goals. Of 10 UC freshmen, 4 will graduate from a UC campus in four years, 2 more will graduate in the fifth year, 1 will graduate from the University sometime later and another will graduate from some other college or university. Therefore, 8 out of 10 students who start as freshmen at one of the UC campuses will eventually obtain the baccalaureate, and two-thirds of our graduates will go on to graduate school.

Over the years our freshman graduation rate has remained relatively stable. Of the 24 students in the first class at Berkeley, 12 attended commencement four years later. A similar percentage of students graduated from Berkeley and UCLA in the 1950's. If anything, a slightly higher percentage of our freshmen are now completing the baccalaureate. Also, our freshman graduation rates are similar to those of the universities of Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, and New York, the four state universities with which we frequently compare our institution.

While we should be proud of this excellent record, we cannot afford to become complacent. Although the performance of our freshmen has been quite good, fewer students have been transferring from the Community Colleges to the University, and the academic performance of those who do transfer has been declining. This is especially troubling because we are dependent upon strong community college transfer programs. In accordance with the Master Plan for Higher Education in California, our present academic programs were developed mostly for upper division and graduate students. Therefore, I will be discussing with you today the factors that have contributed to the decline of transfer education in the context of the five major trends affecting higher education in California in the 1980's.

Five Major Trends Affecting Higher Education

1. Fewer High School Graduates

Twenty years ago when the Master Plan for Higher Education was written, the state was planning for tremendous growth in college enrollments. Now, that period of growth is over. Because there has been a significant decline in the birth rate, the number of high school graduates in the United States is projected to decline by 16% from the mid-1970's to the mid-1980's. The Department of Finance is projecting a similar decline for the State of California.

2. Changing Ethnic Mix

The second major trend in California is a significant shift in the ethnic composition of the State. While the total number of high school graduates is projected to decline by 16%, we project that the number of White high school graduates will decline by 35-40%. During this same period the number of Hispanic and Asian graduates will increase significantly, and the number of Black high school graduates will remain constant.

Los Angeles County

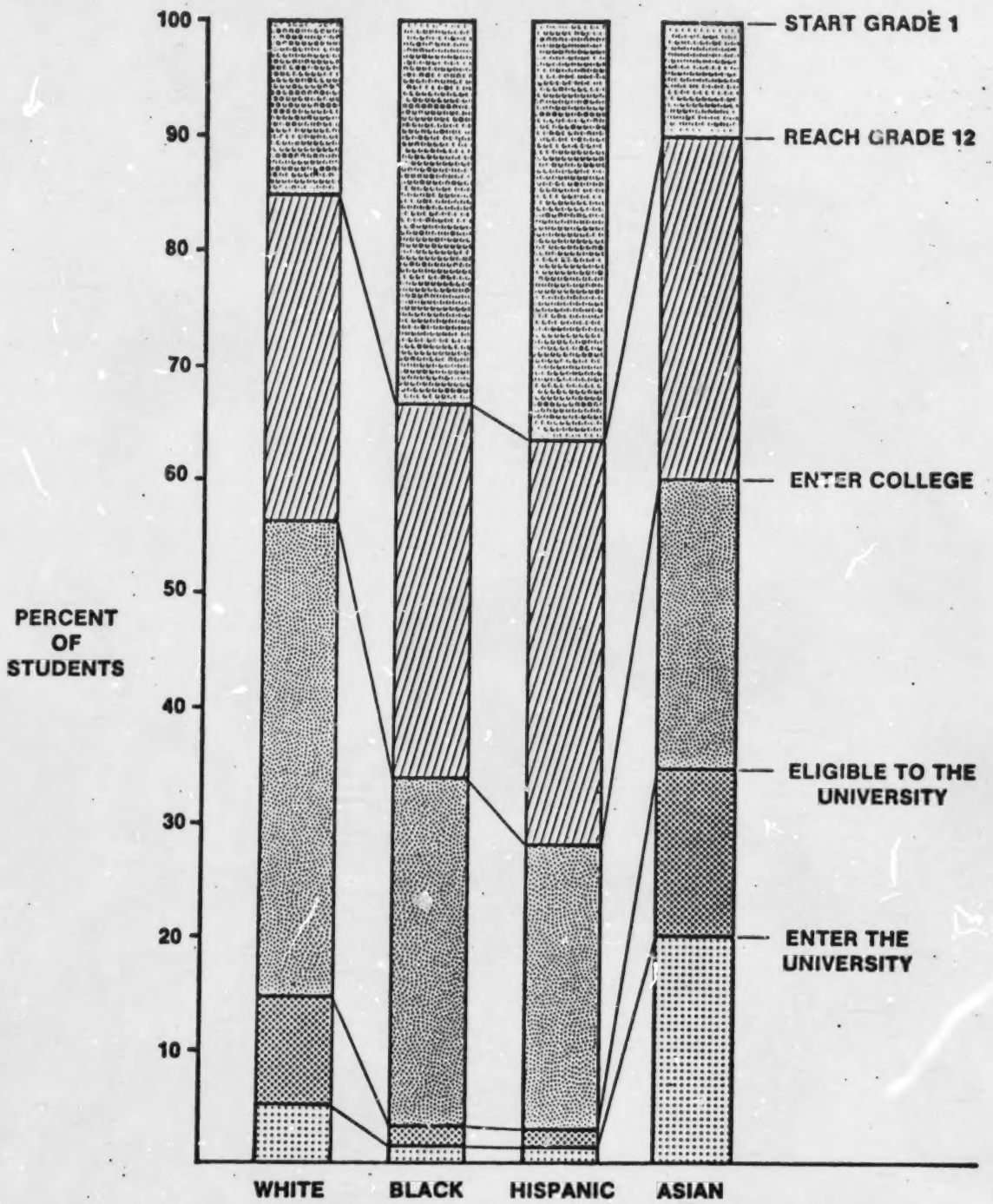
The changes in the ethnic composition of the state have been particularly noticeable in the major population centers. Approximately one-third of the people in California live in Los Angeles County. Over the past 30 years the ethnic minority population of Los Angeles County has increased from 15% to 50%. Because the average age of the White population is much older than the age of the other ethnic groups, this trend will probably continue through the next decade. Immigration is producing an increase in the Asian population of Los Angeles, but the

major demographic change throughout Southern California is the large increase in the Hispanic population. Today, one-half of the children in kindergarten in Los Angeles County are Hispanic.

Northern California

Approximately one-fourth of the students in San Francisco and Alameda County public schools are Black. Another one-fourth in San Francisco County are Asian. With recent immigration, the most significant trend affecting higher education in Northern California is the growing Asian population, because traditionally a large percentage of Asian high school graduates have gone to college. While the major impact of the increasing Hispanic population will be in Southern California, there will also be an increase in the northern part of the state.

These ethnic changes are very important because the probability of going to college is not the same for all ethnic groups. The chart on the next page shows that of 100 White students who start the first grade, about 85 will reach the twelfth grade, about 14 will be eligible for admission to the University of California, and only 5 will actually attend a UC campus. Notice that the percentage of Black and Hispanic students who graduate from high school and the percentage who are eligible to go to the University are considerably lower. We enroll a high percentage of those Black and Hispanic high school graduates who are eligible, but relatively few are eligible. That is why our Outreach and Student Affirmative Action programs are working with underrepresented ethnic minority students while they are still in the junior and senior high schools. More will be said about the quality of academic preparation of students in our high schools in a later section of this report.



FLOW OF FRESHMEN INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

3. Vocational Orientation

Today's college students are very concerned about career planning and job opportunities. More UC students today are concerned about being well-off financially, and fewer are interested in developing a meaningful philosophy of life, than were our students of the early 1970's. Similarly, in the California State University and Colleges there has also been a decline in the percentage of students majoring in the liberal arts and sciences, with an increase in professionally oriented programs.

This trend is also reflected in the growth of vocational programs in the Community Colleges. From 1965 to 1976 the percentage of community college students in vocational programs across the nation grew from 13% to 50%. While vocational and community service programs have been growing, transfer programs have been declining.

Data for 1979 indicate that of 1.1 million students enrolled for credit in the California Community Colleges fewer than 60,000 transferred to a CSUC or UC campus. Fewer than 6,000 students transferred to the University of California. That is a drop of more than 25% in four years.

With more than one hundred community colleges in California, each responding to local needs, we should not be surprised to see important differences among them. Transfer programs have grown at some community colleges and have declined precipitously at others. The shifts to vocational programs and the decline in the number of transfer students have been most pronounced in the large urban districts, with growing numbers of ethnic minority students in the San Francisco Bay area and in Los Angeles County. However, the general trends described above have affected most of our community colleges in California and have also affected community colleges in other states.

The decline in the number of community college transfers has been so dramatic that we are now sending more students to the Community Colleges than they send to us. In the Fall of 1979 10,000 students entered the Community Colleges after last attending the University of California. It is true that more than 5,000 of these former UC students had already completed the baccalaureate and were probably taking a community college course to pursue a particular interest; but that is just the point. Most students today plan to attend a community college occasionally to learn something of interest to them. Many are not concerned about college credits or grades, and relatively few transfer to a four-year institution to complete the baccalaureate.

So, community college transfer programs are getting smaller and are producing fewer transfer students. Therefore, both CSUC and UC have the capacity to admit more students directly from high school. Unfortunately, to do so will also produce a downward spiraling effect on the size and nature of transfer programs in the Community Colleges. For, as fewer UC and CSUC eligible high school students enter the Community Colleges, the best students are removed from the transfer classes. This lowers the level of competition in the community college classroom, lowers the level of text that can be used, the amount of material that can be covered, and the norm for grading purposes. In support of this point, we have found that courses in the Community Colleges are less likely to require higher level cognitive activities of students than our own lower division courses.

These remarks should not be taken to mean that the Community Colleges have failed. In fact, Californians believe that the locally-based Community Colleges have been extremely effective in adapting to changing community needs. A recent Field Poll indicates that fewer than 3% of those surveyed

felt the California Community Colleges were doing a poor job. They have not failed. They have been quite successful, but successful at those aspects of their mission that are farthest removed from their historic relationship to the University of California.

4. Attrition

With growing concern about poor preparation in the high schools there has been considerable discussion about attrition in our colleges and universities. The community college faculty have been talking about the growing number of their students who cannot read at the sixth grade level. As if these preparation problems were not serious enough already, Clark Kerr has recently suggested that the community colleges provide special educational programs to bring the growing numbers of high school dropouts back into the educational system. Can we really ask our community colleges to offer such elementary remedial programs and still expect them to maintain academic transfer programs comparable to the lower division at the University?

With many students entering the Community Colleges with deficiencies in basic academic skills, we should not be surprised to find that there has been a decline in the academic performance of students who transfer from the Community Colleges to the University of California. Transfer shock in the first year is as great for community college transfers as for students who enter from high school. Compared to our own freshmen who eventually become juniors, community college transfers get lower grades, are more likely to be on probation, and are less likely to graduate. And the gap between the performance of community college transfers and our own freshmen who become juniors is increasing.

Graduation rates for community college transfers have declined at every one of our UC campuses. The decline in academic performance has

been particularly acute for students with lower GPA's in community college courses. Both the percentage of students on probation and the percentage of students leaving in academic difficulty during the first year have increased sharply for students with transfer GPA's between 2.4 and 2.8.

In short, many students are entering college with limited academic skills. The community colleges have changed to meet the most serious preparation problems and have greatly expanded their vocational and community service programs. Therefore, many of the best students are entering four-year institutions directly from high school and the transfer function is in jeopardy.

5. Funding Uncertainty

As we look to the years ahead, one of the most optimistic words to describe future funding for education in California is "uncertainty." In the wake of Proposition 13, Proposition 4 and the depletion of the state surplus, possible budget cuts are highly probable.

Budget cuts and low enrollments have already led to restricted course offerings in community college transfer programs. For all practical purposes, if we continue on the present downward spiral, many Community College campuses will not articulate with UC campuses because they will not be able to afford to offer the vocational and community service programs their students demand as well as the breadth and quality of program that will prepare students for the University of California. And, we are clearly headed in that direction. In 1978, 20 out of 72 Community College districts sent fewer than 20 students to the UC system.

Further restrictions of the flow of well-qualified students from the Community Colleges to the University would have serious implications:

1. It would change the very nature of the Community Colleges, with a deleterious effect on faculty morale.
2. It would result in more of our students entering directly from high school with a consequent demand for lower division courses that we do not have the resources to provide.
3. It would restrict the options available to students in those districts--students who most likely will come from educationally and financially disadvantaged backgrounds.

And yet, we cannot afford to ignore the realities of what has been called "the decline of transfer education."

Academic Preparation and Funding of the High Schools

Many of the problems faced by our Community Colleges can be traced back to the high schools. Several indicators point to a continuing decline in the quality of precollegiate education. California public schools were once at the forefront of education, but our test scores have declined substantially. California students now fall around the national average in academic assessment.

Why has there been such a decline in the quality of education in California? The State Department of Education and the Board of Education are jointly studying several factors that seem to contribute to the problem. One important factor is that students in California take fewer academic courses in high school than students in other states. With the proliferation of elective courses and the granting of credit for work experience, the probability that a college-bound, California high school student will have taken trigonometry or advanced science courses is far below the national average.

The decline in preparation is not restricted to "inner city" schools and it has not missed our brightest students. In fact, the declining level of preparation of the best students would have already led to lower freshman graduation rates at the University, if we had not offered preparatory programs and if students were not taking longer to graduate. But, I am afraid that the growing gap between a University of the highest standards and a below average system of public schools will ultimately result in rising attrition rates for our freshmen.

While I am concerned about the decline in the quality of preparation in general, I am particularly concerned about the quality of preparation in the high schools from which the University's underrepresented ethnic

minority students graduate. Mare Taagepera from UC Irvine's Department of Chemistry made several visits to those high schools in Los Angeles and Orange Counties. She found very few students in college preparatory courses. Those students who did take these courses frequently had poor study habits and covered less materials than students in other high schools.

Dr. Taagepera writes:

> One teacher mentioned that this time last year he had been on p. 240 of his Algebra II text and that now he was on p. 70 and could not go any faster. The faculty of another high school were somewhat demoralized, saying that even if they assigned homework, maybe 2 of 30 students do it. The teachers faced with the option of either giving C's for sitting in class or F's and sending the student out of the school system into the streets. We talked to a biology and a chemistry class. Two of thirty chemistry students said they studied one half hour or more for a test. The rest studied five minutes or less. Approximately 80% of these students raised their hands when I asked how many of them were planning on going to college.

Of course the important factor is socio-economic status and not race. For, students from Baldwin Hills schools, a predominatly upper-middle class Black neighborhood in Los Angeles, consistently score among the very best high schools in the state. Neither can one attribute academic difficulties solely to being bilingual, because those who score highest on state tests are those who speak Chinese or Japanese and English. But, these are exceptions. One of the most serious problems of our society is that predominantly minority neighborhoods are frequently low socio-economic status communities. Poor education in low socio-economic status districts virtually guarantees that ethnic minorities will be denied upward social mobility.

This is a very complex problem of great importance to our society, and our educational institutions should be expected to help solve it. But, if there were simple answers, we would have solved it a long time ago.

It will take some of our best minds, sustained dedication, additional

resources, and time to make any real progress. I do not have the answers, but I do know that the problem will not go away because a committee of the Legislature passes a resolution requiring colleges and universities to have the same percentage of ethnic minority students that exists in the general population. It will not be helped by budget cuts that result in larger classes, when lower socio-economic class students require more individualized attention. It will surely be compounded when California high schools, which already have fewer counselors than other states, fire the counselors who gave the advice about going to college to students whose parents may never have completed high school, let alone college. However, funding problems are forcing our schools to take these actions.

Twenty years ago the State of California was one of the highest in expenditures per pupil for public education from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. According to figures provided by the National Education Association, we spent $494 per pupil, while the national average was $390. By 1969 California had slipped to 17th, as several states significantly increased their support for public education. Now, we are below the national average. But, what does this really mean to our schools? The answer can be found in a recent article entitled "The Slow Death of a Public High School," which describes what happened to San Jose High School when funding fell below minimally acceptable levels. After several years of new requirements without adequate financial support, Proposition 13 struck the final blow. In the fall of 1979 the school day in San Jose High School was reduced from six periods to five, and 17% of the teachers were released. Teachers with seniority stayed, but they faced larger classes and were frequently required to teach courses for which they were not adequately trained. Elective courses, such as English as a Second Language and Reading, were

cancelled. Extracurricular activities that frequently serve as motivators were dropped. The amount of counseling time was cut in half. Behavioral problems increased and so did absenteeism. As absenteeism increases, funding will be reduced further and San Jose High School will be trapped in the maelstrom.

This tragic story is being repeated in other schools in our state. Los Angeles Unified School District has reduced the number of school periods from six to five this year for all juniors and seniors. Similar actions were contemplated this fall in districts from San Francisco to San Diego.

The fact is that public education in California is drastically underfunded. Here and there, special programs are supported so that we can point to efforts to improve our educational system. Many of them are exciting new ideas, but the basic educational program remains underfunded.

Of course one cannot lay the whole blame for the failure of our schools on inadequate funding. Clearly, other changes in our society have also had a significant effect on our schools. Neither should we assume that there is a direct relationship between the amount of funding and the quality of education. Catastrophe theory tells us that as funding is reduced by small amounts there will be a less than proportional effect on quality. In the short-run, schools can reduce the number of counselors, nurses and librarians and defer the maintenance of their buildings. Over the long-run, the cumulative effects of these actions will result in a sudden drop in quality. Once the catastrophe has occurred, it takes a large increment of resources over a considerable period of time to return to that previous level of quality. We have a reponsibility to explain this to the politicians in Sacramento and to the voters of this state. That catastrophe has already happened in San Jose, and several other districts are at the critical turning point.

Our own state policies, though well-intentioned, frequently contribute to our problems. Take, for example, the new minimum proficiency standards for high school graduation, which require that students found to have deficiencies must take remedial courses. A recent study indicates that 30-50% of California tenth grade students were found to have deficiencies, but no funds were provided for the remedial courses. So teachers have been taken from advanced cources to teach remedial courses. Once again, a basically underfunded educational program has an effect on our best students. The teachers do not particularly want to teach those remedial courses, and the students do not want to take them. Not surprisingly, the motivation levels for coming to class or doing the homework are quite low.

In summary, we have seen a declinc in the community college transfer function, which can be traced to a number of trends including poor preparation in the high schools. The problems in our high schools can be attributed to inadequate state funding, changing state policies, the changing nature of the family, television, and the increase of violence and the use of drugs in our schools, etc. Ultimately, higher education shares some of the responsibility, because we have provided the training for the teachers and school administrators. Rather than blaming any one factor, we should be aware of the trends, and then make improvements at each point on the circle.

What Are We Doing About It?

Below are the five trends affecting higher education in California as I see them:

1. Fewer high school graduates, which eventually will translate into lower college enrollments and lower levels of state funding for all levels of education,
2. Far fewer White students and many more ethnic minority students, who have higher attrition rates at all stages of the educational process,
3. Increasing vocationalism, resulting in smaller Community College transfer programs and fewer transfers to the UC and CSUC systems,
4. Further decline in preparation and rising attrition for students at all stages of the educational process,
5. Possible budget cuts that may result in still further declines in preparation and the elimination of transfers from some community colleges to the University.

These problems are serious, but if we work together with the other educational leaders of the State, we can minimize the effects of these trends. California is known for the ability of its segments to come together to develop plans for the future. Despite the uncertainty, we must begin the cooperative planning process.

The University of California has already taken the lead in the area of long-range planning. Following an excellent report by the Joint Planning Committee last year, the President and his staff have been working on a new Academic Plan for the University. The draft of that Academic Plan contains several sections that address the concerns that I have just been discussing. President Saxon has also asked each Chancellor to develop a

new campus academic plan in light of the trends described above.

Recognizing that we cannot solve these problems by ourselves, President Saxon has also announced to you that he intends to organize a Roundtable for Equal Educational Opportunity, to discuss ways to improve basic skills, broaden access, and increase retention. This action is reminiscent of steps taken by Robert Gordon Sproul when he organized three intersegmental planning efforts during his tenure as President of the University of California--the last of which culminated in the Master Plan for Higher Education in California.

Last year Professor Karl Pister, as Chairman of the U.C. Academic Senate, began a series of meetings with the faculty of the other segments to discuss these issues. We are all deeply indebted to him. For, at a time when the segments are headed for increased competition for fewer students and less funding, Professor Pister extended the colleagial hand of cooperation.

This was a very important step, because these issues of educational policy frequently translate into matters that can only be resolved by our respective faculties. I am pleased to tell you that Professor Ben Aaron, this year's Academic Senate Chairman, is continuing those intersegmental faculty discussions.

In addition to efforts to increase awareness of these matters, there are two major types of on-going University activites directed at the problem:

1. Efforts to improve articulation and the preparation of students before they enter the University, and
2. Programs at the University designed to improve the quality of student life and increase retention.

There is not time to discuss each of these programs today. Those of you who are interested will find a brief description of many of these programs in the Report of the Retention and Transfer Task Group. Suffice it to say that there is an exciting array running from summer transition programs to special support services during the academic year. These programs and services require additional support. I am very pleased that The Regents' Budget this year includes a request for additional state funding for these activities.

What Can The Regents Do?

What else can The Regents do about these important matters? You can not alter the demographic changes that are occurring in our state, but you can insist upon the highest standards of academic preparation of our new students. After talking with teachers, school administrators, members of school boards, community college presidents, and faculty members from all parts of the state, I can only conclude that they would welcome your support. Two years ago Stanford University sent an open letter to high schools, students, and parents encouraging prospective applicants to take more solid academic subjects in high school. Now, it is time for the University of California also to insist upon better preparation. Some will advise you that this would not be proper, and that the University should not meddle in the affairs of the high schools and community colleges. Those who would favor such an isolationist policy fail to understand our dependency on the other segments and the vital role that The Regents have played in the past.

From the very beginning this University has been concerned about the quality of preparation of its students. During California's first years there were no state tax-supported high schools. The Board of Regents supported the Superintendent of Public Instruction in arguing for adequate

state funding for public education at all levels to insure that students would be well prepared for the University. Finally, in 1902 a constitutional amendment was passed that provided for a special state school tax for the support of high schools.

About that same time the University took another important step to insure high standards, for there was no guarantee that the private schools and these new public high schools would be of high quality. In 1884 the University began accrediting the high schools to "encourage and build up strong and efficient schools of secondary grade." The push for state funding and the accreditation of the high schools made it clear from the beginning that the University of California would promote the highest standards. As President Davis said in his 1888 report to the Governor on behalf of the Board of Regents:

> The grade of the public schools depends directly on the grade of the University. If we should lower our standard of education, the public schools would be content with what we prescribed as essential and would conform to the new standard. Now, the general intelligence of the people rests largely on the influence of the school. When the schools are poor the people generally are ignorant. So that the welfare of the whole community is ultimately involved in the maintenance of our standard.

Almost one hundred years later, we see a series of factors that threaten California's system of education. Once again this Board, this administration, and this faculty must insist upon the highest standards of education for the greater benefit of the citizens of this state, now and for future generations.

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